

# Racial Disparities Continue in Preventive Health Care

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The racial gap in preventive health care -- such as Pap tests, mammograms, and prostate and colorectal cancer screenings -- persists and might be larger than previously thought, a [study](#) published online in BMC Health Services Research finds, the [Washington Post](#) reports.

For the study, Kevin Fiscella, an associate professor of family medicine and community and preventive medicine at the University of Rochester's School of Medicine, and colleagues compared self reports from patients and Medicare claims from their physicians to see when they were eligible for and last had screenings for several conditions.

The study, which was funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, examined 7,400 patients eligible for mammograms, 4,700 eligible for Pap tests, 7,000 eligible for prostate cancer screening, 1,400 eligible for colorectal cancer screening, 10,400 eligible for cholesterol testing and 18,300 eligible for flu shots, according to the *Post*.

The study found that 45% of black and Hispanic women were eligible for mammograms and that 30.4% underwent the procedure. Among white women, 52.5% were eligible for mammograms, and 45.1% received the tests.

Racial disparities in breast cancer mortality rates continue, according to Fiscella.

However, surveys show that black women were receiving mammograms almost as often as white women, the *Post* reports.

"We think there's more social pressure on minorities (to report having been screened) because the inaccurate stereotype is that minorities don't care about their health like whites do," Fiscella said, adding, "And so when a (minority) person answers that question, they are answering in the context of existing social stereotypes, (and there is) more pressure to say, 'I'm not like that. Of course I take care of my health.'"

According to Ernest Moy, a senior service fellow at AHRQ, the study emphasizes the importance of including different data sources -- such as self reports, insurance claims and medical records -- to accurately understand racial health disparities (Payne, *Washington Post*, 10/17).

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